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Report of the Secretary-General*

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 53/194 of 15 December 1998, the General Assembly requested that the Secretary-General consider innovative measures to improve interaction and communication between the United Nations University (UNU) and the rest of the United Nations system.

2. The present report has been prepared in response to that request by the General Assembly. It supplements the report of the Council of the United Nations University on the work of the University in 1999 (A/55/31).

3. The present report is the third in a series dealing with this subject (A/51/324 and A/53/408). During the past year the University has continued to make significant progress in developing closer relations with other parts of the United Nations system. In December 1999, at its forty-sixth session, the Council of the University adopted a four-year strategic plan. The plan draws on the recommendations of a number of external evaluations conducted in 1998, and was developed in close consultation with representatives from different United Nations organizations and agencies. The strategic plan initiates what will be an ongoing planning process to be pursued at several levels within the UNU community. The planning process will benefit from feedback from the University's main stakeholders and partners. During the planning period (2000-2004), the University will begin to order its ongoing projects and new initiatives within two broad programme areas: peace and governance and environment and sustainable development. The programme on peace and governance focuses on pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict measures and governance issues. The programme on environment and sustainable development focuses on development, science and technology and environment, as well as interactions among these fields, and will pay particular attention to questions related to poverty and inequity, growth and employment, technological change, urbanization, natural resource management and sustainable energy use and production.

4. In a number of major public addresses, I have relied on UNU research findings regarding conflict prevention and poverty eradication. In Tokyo, in January 2000, the University organized a conference on the key challenges of the new millennium. The conference papers provided valued inputs for "We the Peoples", my report to the Millennium Assembly (A/54/2000). The University has also played a major role in the planning, development and implementation of such critical events as the Economic and Social Council's high-level segment on information technology.

* The footnote requested by the General Assembly in resolution 54/248 was not included in the submission.

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II. The United Nations University in the context of the reform and revitalization of the United Nations

5. The University continues to be closely involved in the work and activities of the Economic and Social Council. It has provided valuable evaluations of United Nations economic flagship reports and made important submissions to a number of Economic and Social Council projects, most notably the policy papers that it is preparing on official development assistance and safety nets for social development. In addition, the University participated in the development of a proposal, in conjunction with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to strengthen the capacity of natural resource-dependent developing-country governments to formulate sound policies for sustainable resource-based development.

6. The work of the University on the causes of civil wars and on conflict prevention policies was particularly valuable in the preparation of the thematic essay that was used as the introduction to my annual report on the work of the Organization for 1999 (A/54/1).

III. The United Nations University and the intergovernmental processes

7. **General Assembly and Economic and Social Council**: The United Nations University continues to support the work of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly. In 1999, the University published a number of papers prepared for an expert group meeting held in New York 1998 under the auspices of the Secretariat, which examined the economic and political implications of the Asian crisis. Subsequently, the book, *Global Financial Turmoil and Reform: A United Nations Perspective* was published by the UNU Press. This study is part of a new series on policy perspectives designed to disseminate policy-related research of interest to the international community, the United Nations and its Member States. Another book in the same series, *Globalization: The United Nations Development Dialogue* was published earlier this year. The latter collection is based on material drawn from Economic and Social Council debates on finance, trade, poverty and peace-building. Both volumes were widely circulated to representatives of Member States at Headquarters. This year the University organized a policy panel to discuss issues raised by the theme of the high-level segment of the Council, "Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based economy". The members of the panel were drawn primarily from the UNU research network. The University also helped finance the work of the high-level panel of experts on information and communication technology, which met at Headquarters from 17 to 20 April 2000, and which produced a report for the Council. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research and UNU have continued their fruitful collaboration, organizing seminars and workshops using UNU research as a basis for training delegates in New York on issues relating to the environment and trade.

8. **United Nations global conferences**: During the past decade the University has provided significant support for key United Nations conferences. It continues to play a role in their follow-up and implementation, especially in relation to capacity-building and impact-evaluation. In June 2000, in preparation for the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled, "Women 2000: gender equality development and peace for the twenty-first century", the University held a women's leadership research and training course. Course participants were mid-career female officials from government delegations to the special session of the Assembly. In cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the University is completing a study of the new roles and functions for the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions that will be brought to the attention of the General Assembly in the fall. As a follow-up to the Second World Water Forum, UNU will help lead the creation of a "World Water Development Report". The first edition of the report will be issued in 2002. It will include a global analysis of world water issues and a progress report on the implementation of the water-related objectives set out in Agenda 21, which was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The report is intended to assist developing countries in improving their monitoring, assessment and reporting capacity, with particular focus on water quality, water use, human health impacts and river basin management.

9. The University is intensifying its efforts to disseminate its research and policy analysis findings more effectively. The United Nations University Press has played a critical role in this process, publishing 19 new titles in 1999. The various UNU web sites are an increasingly important means of communication with the University's constituency. The use of a range of media to promote University activities has become increasingly important. In March 1999, for example, the University contributed to a significant media campaign to mark the World Day for Water. In June 1999, to help celebrate World Environment Day, the University organized a series of activities. On World Food Day, in October 1999, a media campaign was organized in conjunction with the World Bank that highlighted the work of the University in the area of soil conservation. The number of University seminars, workshops and conferences has been increased, particularly in New York and Paris. For example, an important seminar was organized in New York in March 2000, at which international scholars and practitioners presented their analyses of the legal, political and economic aspects of the Kosovo crisis.

IV. United Nations University links with the United Nations analytical work

10. During 2000, the University has strengthened its working links with various United Nations organizations, in particular the Secretariat and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Numerous officials from United Nations bodies (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the regional commissions, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Bretton Woods institutions now participate in UNU meetings.

11. In July 1999, for example, the University, in cooperation with other United Nations bodies, held an international conference on inter-linkages: synergies and coordination between the multilateral environmental agreements. A key output of the conference was the inter-linkages report, which explored inter-linkages among scientific mechanisms, information systems; institutions; finance; and issue-management.

12. The UNU is also participating in a four-year joint research project on nutrition with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and a number of national institutions. Due for completion in 2002, the project seeks to develop a new international growth reference for infants and young children, involving seven diverse geographic sites throughout the world.

V. Coordination and interaction within the United Nations system

13. **Secretariat of the United Nations**. Informal consultations are held regularly between the Rector and senior academic staff of the University and senior United Nations officials. Other contacts are maintained throughout the United Nations system at the working level. A central motivation for these extensive interactions is to keep the University abreast of the evolving policy analysis concerns and requirements of the system. As noted previously, the preparation of the University's strategic plan was based on in-depth consultations with United Nations officials. The millennium conference of the University was prepared in close cooperation with the Strategic Planning Unit and the office of the Deputy Secretary-General. Since 1996, the University has participated in the United Nations sabbatical leave programme. A representative of the University currently sits in the programme selection committee and the University has indicated its readiness to provide prospective applicants with support services and facilities.

14. **Participation in the Administrative Committee on Coordination**. The University is kept informed of the programme of work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and, in particular, about any issues to which UNU research and capacity-building activities could be useful. The Rector of the University has participated in all sessions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination since the fall of 1997. The University also continues to play an active role in the subsidiary machinery of the Committee, most notably in the work of its subcommittees on nutrition, water resources and sustainable environment. The above-mentioned World Water Development Report is an outgrowth of the work of the Subcommittee on Water Resources, in which the University is actively involved. The University has also

continued to take part in the work of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development.

15. **University collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**: The University continues to work with UNESCO in a diversified and extensive manner. UNU has worked closely with UNESCO on the follow-up to the World Conference on Higher Education, the project for twinning universities (UNITWIN)/UNESCO chairs programme, the World Conference on Science, the management of social transformation programme, the International Hydrological Programme and the Man and the Biosphere Programme, as well as on capacity-building for education software and computer science curriculum development.

VI. Conclusion

16. The University continues to expand its activities and programmes despite the relatively modest level of its funding. Its research findings play an important role in policy formation in many parts of the wider United Nations system. However, in many areas there is a clear need for better communication between research producers in the University system and potential research consumers working in policy planning and implementation areas of the system. The University is addressing this need, in part through a new dialogue process initiated in Geneva this year, which brings research producers and consumers together to discuss how collaboration can be enhanced. At the inaugural meeting, the importance of using new information technologies to communicate research findings more effectively was stressed. The creative use of information technologies offers extraordinary opportunities for the University, not only to communicate more effectively with the rest of the United Nations system, but also to help address the capacity-building needs of the developing world.